
MINUTES TO THE 7TH MEETING OF THE (MEN'S) EUROPEAN HANDBALL LEAGUE BOARD

(Parallel to the meeting of the NB and preceding the meeting of the PHB)

Date / Time: Tuesday 9 March 2021

Venue: MS Teams Video Conference

Participants:

EHLB:	Nikolas Larsson	Chairman / SWE
	Frank Bohmann	Vice Chairman / GER
	Stefano Podini	Member / ITA
	Patrice Hitz	Member / SUI
	Alf Mangor Johannessen	Member / NOR
	Thierry Wagner	Member / LUX
Guest	Siniša Ostoić	SEHA Gazprom League/CRO
EHF:	Markus Glaser	Chief Sports Officer
	JJ Rowland	Director BDM/Minutes

1. Welcome and introduction

EHLB Chair, Nikolas Larsson, welcomed all members to the meeting, including guest Siniša Ostoić representing the SEHA Gazprom League.

2. EHLB Information

Larsson provided a short update on the work of the EHLB since the last meeting, which has been relatively low key due to the Covid-19 situation. A survey of national leagues and their status has been distributed and completed, with most leagues suffering due to the pandemic. The league conference/workshop is being planned for June 2021, alongside the EHLB General Assembly, for the same weekend on the fringes of the EHF FINAL4 in Cologne.

3. Conference planning

Larsson informed the meeting that the support of the EHF has been requested for the June event. Glaser told the meeting that due to the Covid-19 situation he had no additional information on the status of the event at this time and could not speak for EHF, which is responsible for the organisation of the FINAL4 event.

It was agreed that if the conference could not take place as planned then the options for an online summit would need to be examined. This would potentially also allow for keynote speakers to address participants (Stefan Walzel – topic: Covid-19 and the sponsoring situation, including media rights and new opportunities around marketing and communication; Mario Leo – topic: living with Covid-19 and using social media to keep the handball sport interesting for fans and other actors – social media as a new chance even for emerging nations to reach a larger audience; After-Covid-19: an opportunity to accelerate the social media visibility and to create more content).

A possible schedule for the event was discussed with an informal get-together on Friday evening, possible attendance at Handball Talks events, if taking place, conference on Saturday and General Assembly on Sunday. A possible postponement to winter or next year was discussed if the event could not take place.

The question was raised as to whether all leagues would be completed ahead of the FINAL4 weekend, with NOR yet to decide on strategy, SWE to decide on play-offs after national team week.

Possible topics for the conference were discussed including: Financial impact of the Covid-19 situation on leagues was identified as an important topic for the conference. Hitz proposed inviting people behind the transfer platform Scoutency.com to present their new system at the event.

It was agreed that EHLB will try to cover some costs from SMART programme (get-together Friday evening, seminar and tickets to F4) but that guests would need to cover costs for travel and accommodation. Additional discussions and negotiations will be required on ticket prices and any special prices for accommodation.

4. General Assembly

Planned for Sunday 11 June, to start at 9:30 hrs and to be organised by the current board together with the EHF. Larsson to follow up with Martin Hausleitner as to what possible assistance the EHF could offer in terms of administration, in particular relating to governance and to ensure the correct handling of elections etc., as well as how best to handle these topics in the case of a digital-only meeting.

The question of how nominations will be handled, according to the ranking of federations, and in-line with the first General Assembly was raised. Members of the EHLB have also discussed the possibility of adding one more person to the body, but this would need a further discussion with the EHF to see if this would be possible.

Various issues were discussed, many relating to the Covid-19 situation, which has resulted for example in the rescheduling of the Olympic Games to summer 2021. The planned evaluation of the new club competition system after the first season was discussed. Glaser noted that this now made little sense as competitions have been played without spectators and in difficult circumstances meaning that sponsor input and presentation of competitions cannot be analysed.

5. PHB Meeting

Preparations for the upcoming PHB meeting were discussed, where Larsson and Bohmann would represent the EHLB. The board was informed about the topics the meeting would cover, with a focus on the Covid-19 situation.

The issue of player agents was discussed in light of the position taken by FCH that clubs should no longer pay player agents when they are representing the interest of the players. Larsson noted that this was a tax issue in SWE and a conflict of interests when the clubs have to pay costs for the agent representing a player.

In a discussion round, Bohmann confirmed that the Bundesliga clubs are in favour of this move and see this as a positive step forward, although it will probably not lead to any decline in costs and could also be more expensive. He is therefore in favour of supporting in the motion.

He further suggested that the European leagues could also create its own transfer platform – and that this would be a good topic for June – given that the leagues have the player data and this could represent a business model for the leagues. Following up on the previous point from Hitz relating to the transfer platform, Scoutency.com, it was proposed to organise an initial meeting in March/April.

Hitz confirmed that SUI would support the proposal; Wagner stated that player's agents was not an issue in LUX and Ostoić stated that in his opinion some rules would be better than no rules but that all major leagues would need to follow to make it workable.

It was agreed that with only a limited number of agents in handball and with a focus in the main on Europe rather than worldwide as in basketball or football, such a move would have a better chance of succeeding.

Glaser informed the meeting that there has been a formal approach from the representatives of the clubs – FCH – which wanted to include this in the regulations for the coming season but that the EHF does not believe at the moment that this would be the correct approach to deal with the topic.

6. Miscellaneous

The upcoming elections were discussed, and members asked who might wish to continue for a further period. Larsson noted that ideally there needs to be some representation from the south-east part of Europe and that the potential for one more board member needed to be discussed. Wagner pointed out that he had been nominated for positions within the EHF; Podini stated that as he had been elected to the ITA Olympic Committee in his region he may no longer have the time; Johannessen wanted to continue and Ostoić said that he would serve if elected.

Hitz asked about the possibilities for developing gaming such as handball manager. Bohmann stated that the HBL has a licensing agreement and it is a possibility to transport the sport to a younger generation. Here rights are an issue and leagues need to ensure that their contracts with clubs and players allow for data to be used and marketed centrally.

Finally, the planned meeting calendar for 2021 was also highlighted:

23-24 April 2021 - 15th Ordinary EHF Congress in Luxembourg / Follow-up

9-11 June 2021 – EHLB Conference and General Assembly

11 October 2021 - Next meeting EHLB/PHB